



Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)

Volume 4, Issue 1, March 2018

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29145/llr>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29145/llr/41>

ISSN: 2221-6510 (Print) 2409-109X (Online) Journal homepage: <http://journals.umt.edu.pk/llr/Home.aspx>

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To cite to this article: Muniba Saeed, Amnah Moghees, Saima Abbas Dar (2018): Sense and Feel: The Missing Elements in Faiz Ahmad Faiz's Translated Poetry, Linguistics and Literature Review 4(1): 41-56

To link to this article: 10.29145/llr/41/040104

Published online: March 31, 2018

Article QR Code:



A publication of the
Department of English Language and Literature
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Management and Technology
Lahore, Pakistan

Sense and Feel: The Missing Elements in Faiz Ahmad Faiz's Translated Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Translation of poetry is a hard nut to crack. Especially, when it is loaded with cultural connotations. Beyond any doubt, translation demands linguistic and cultural skills from a translator to express meanings. Hence, the process of translation becomes challenging when both the source language and the target language belong to two different language families. The present study explores the linguistic challenges faced by translators when translating Faiz Ahmad Faiz's Urdu poetry into English. The researchers have found that translating Urdu metaphorical expressions and compound words used in Faiz's Urdu poetry is near to impossible as these expressions are rooted in specific cultural, social, political and historical backgrounds.

Keywords: translation, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, sense and feel relation

Introduction

The most important and identical element of any culture is its language. When archeologists want to do research on any civilization of the past, one core artifact which helps them know about that civilization is its written symbols. Through their written script, they know about their tradition, social practices, beliefs, heritage and ideology. Thus a civilization becomes eternal in its writings, even if it is extinct from the surface of the earth. Therefore, scholars, writers, critics, philosophers and learned people are the assets of any civilization because they best represent and preserve their culture in their writings. Thus language is deeply embedded in culture and when a work especially a literary piece of work is translated into another culture and language, a translator needs to know about the characteristics and foundations of the source culture, so that they can best translate deep soiled cultural words.

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Translation itself is the process of discovery. A translator must be aware of what his/her language can and cannot do. A real translator needs to demonstrate the patience to accomplish the task of translating the source language text (Hence forth SLT) successfully. The translation needs the endless hours of contemplation to explore the depth of the words of source language and then to convert them into equally valued words of target language. According to Dodds (1994: 151), the literary translator should try to cover all the aspects of language. Moreover, Dodds (1994) adds literal translator needs to be concerned about semantic and stylistic features that encompass all the levels of language including phonology.

Poetry and Translation

The process of discovery becomes tormenting, highly sensitive and critical, when one decides to transform a literary especially poetic text into the target language text (Hence forth TLT). In such situation, to retain the true spirit and feel of the source text in the target text becomes a crucial challenge for the translators with a heavy responsibility on their shoulders.

Translating a poetic piece of work is twice difficult because of its specific linguistic structure, expressive value and rich use of cultural words. Newmark (1988) opines that a translator should focus connotative and emotional aspects of imaginative literature especially while translating poetry. Similarly, Czerniawski (1994:3) states, “Poetry is virtually untranslatable.” Translating a poem becomes quite challenging, when TL and SL are far more different in their cultural, social, moral and political elements. Quoting Goethe’s comments on the limitations of translation, Hashmi (2011) says that the inadequacy of translation “is doubly true, if the languages are as far removed in their origin, culture and form as Urdu and English.”

Due to such cultural, social, theological, ideological and philological differences between Urdu and English, one is right to think of taking some liberties while translating “otherwise, literal translation, no matter how much linguistic perfection it exhibits, will be dead, dry and unrhythmic”, said Rahim (2008).

Faiz and Urdu Poetry

Faiz is widely read, appreciated and quoted modern Urdu poet of Pakistan. He had a multidimensional personality. He was a humanist, socialist, Marxist, ideologist, critic, liberal and romantic poet. Majeed (2005) stated that Faiz was the metaphor of his age.

Faiz wrote eight volumes of poetry and six volumes of prose, as well as other works. The practice of translating Faiz’s poetry had been started even in his own life. At least 5 translators even from across the borders have contributed to the making of whole English volume of Faiz’s poetry till today. Russell (1992: 229) considers Faiz the most popular and progressive poet of subcontinent of his time.

It is important to know here about Faiz’s own concept of poetry, which he has given in his two essays; “Poetry and Sense” and “Thoughts on the Future of Ghazal”. For him, a good poetry consists of “Sense” and “Feel”. In his poetry, these two elements are not abstract. Rather

they provide foundations for his poetic works. He, as Majeed (2005) has noted, defines sense, “The sense that poetry needs is not more grammatical sense, but social sense.”

In Faiz’s poetic concept, sense is social cement which binds an individual with society. One identifies oneself with the whole humanity, when one shares the common experiences of feeling with the rest and as Majeed (2005: 208) noted Faiz’s words, “poetry without feeling is nonsense”. Thus Faiz has exhibited this socialist approach in his poetry.

Faiz was of the view that even a layman could write a poem based on the common words like, love, life, death with the help of rhyming dictionary but it would not have sense and the people would never take pain to read such nonsensical poetry. As Henry (1858: 192) writes in the words of Johnson said, “A man might write such stuff for ever, if he would but abandon his mind to it.”

Faiz established the relationship between the “conscious mind” and “feeling” through a consistent metaphor of “beach” and “a deep sea”.

He asserted in his essay, “Poetry and Sense” that the poetic ideas are the “jetsam” left on the beach of mind by the heavy tides of feelings. Taking up the role of a critical intellect, he had combined “these bits of wreckage, to build them up, as it were, into a house.” Majeed (2005: 209)

To build up the replica of that Faiz’s house, a translator needs to understand the architecture, components, grounds and purpose of the house i.e. poetry.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to reaffirm the idea that the English translations of Faiz’s poetry are mere illusions and do not convey realistically his socialistic approach which is the essence of his poetry. The researchers believe that taking liberties while translating Faiz’s poetry will distort both the “sense” and “feel” which are the main components of Faiz’s poetry.

Research Questions

- i. What are the poetic elements of Faiz’s Urdu poetry, which cannot be faithfully translated into another language like English?
- ii. Why these poetic elements of Faiz’s Urdu poetry are difficult to be translated into English language?

Methodology

Literary critics and translators have defined different methods of translation. However, McGuire (1980, 81-82) quotes seven different ways of doing translation of a poem. These are the following:

- a) *Phonemic Translation*: This method carries the sound and meaning of the ST to the TT. However, in the opinion of Lefevere, as a result of this method, the product may be odd distorting the original meaning.
- b) *Literal Translation*: it renders word-for-word translation which does not offer faithful translation of SLT.
- c) *Verse-to-Prose Translation*: It completely deforms the original structure of SLT. This is a type of weak translation.
- d) *Metrical Translation*: In this method, the translator tries to imitate the ST meter in TT. Since every language has its own stress, sound and intonation pattern and pronunciation, the final product of translation may be lacking in meaning and format.
- e) *Rhymed Translation*: This method gives stress on transferring original rhyming scheme from ST to TT. In this way the translation may sound accurate, but semantically it may fail to communicate the original meaning.
- f) *Free Verse Translation*: This is opposite to rhymed translation in which the translator is more concerned with transporting the original meaning of the ST than its meter and rhyme.
- g) *Interpretation*: It is further divided into two categories i.e. version, which is semantically true to ST and secondly imitation, which is quite different from the ST except the title, subject and the first point.

In this paper the researchers have given a comparative study of two different translators' English versions of Faiz's Ghazal which projects his "social sense".

Sample

To address the research questions, the researchers have selected Faiz Ahmad Faiz's Ghazal, "رنگِ بے دل کا مرے" and its two English translations i.e. a) "Before You Came" by a native English user, Kiernan (2011), and b) "It is the Color of My Heart" by a nonnative English user, Ravi Kopra (2011).

Data Analysis

Table 1. Comparative Analysis

Line No	Faiz	a) Kiernan	b) Kopra	Trnslation Method
1	تم نہ آئے تھے تو ہر اک چیز وہی تھی کہ جو ہے	Before you came, all things were what they are—	When you didn't come, things were they should be -	a)Literal Translation b) Free Verse Translation
2	آسمان حدِ نظر راہِ گزر، راہِ گزر، شیشہ مہ، شیشہ مہ	The sky sight's boundary, the road a road,	the sky was as far as I could see, the road to travel by was	a)Literal Translation b) Interpretation

		The glass of wine a glass of wine; since then,	a road, the goblet was a glassful of wine.	
3	اور اب شیشہ مہ، راہگزر، رنگِ فلک	Road, wineglass, colour of heaven, all have taken	And now, a glassful of wine, the road to travel by,	a) Interpretation b) Literal Translation
4	رنگِ بے دل کا مرے خونِ جگر ہونے تک	The hues of this heart ready to melt into blood--	and the colour of the sky, are like the colours of my blood, flowing from my heart to my liver.	a) Literal Translation b) Interpretation

As the above analysis shows, both of the translators have adopted different translation methods to communicate Faiz's message given in his very Ghazal. Urdu metaphorical expression is hard to translate. For example, Urdu metaphor "جگر" is meant for heart not liver in Urdu poetry. As we associate the feelings, passion, wish, desire, love and sensitivity to the "heart", the same are associated to "جگر" in Urdu while the English poetic practice and tradition don't carry the same for liver and English native can never feel the same pulse of Faiz's poetic idiomatic expressions. The above translators didn't seem to take the liver in the same context.

It is evident at the same time that Kiernan and Kopra tried to imitate Faiz's Ghazal semantically, but they fail to create the rhythm and musicality of the verses created through the repetition of certain words as verse number 2 shows in the above table. Similarly, both of the translations have no rhyming scheme unlike Faiz who has used *aabb* in the first four verses.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis

Line No	Faiz	a) Kiernan	b) Kopra	Translation method
5	چمپئ رنگِ کبھی راحتِ دیدار کا رنگ	Now golden, as the solace of meeting is,	Sometimes golden, like the shine of your eyes when we meet.	a) Literal Translation b) Free Verse Translation
6	سرمئی رنگی ہے سا عتِ بیزار کا رنگ	Now grey, the livery of despondent hours,	Sometimes grey and saddening like	a) Literal Translation

			the sickening feelings of partings.	b) Interpretation
7	زرد پتوں کا خاص وخر کا رنگ	Or tint of yellow leaves, of garden trash,	Other times like colours of old leaves, of trash, of dry grass,	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation
8	سُرخ پھولوں کا دہکتے ہوئے گلزار کا رنگ	Or scarlet petal, a flowered all ablaze:	of red flowers in flower-beds,	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation

According to the above table, both of the translations don't have any regular rhyming scheme as contrary to Faiz's original Ghazal where each line ends in "rang". Likewise, both translations could not offer the faithful translation of relative compound words. The poetic expression "راحتِ دیدار" has been translated as 'solace of meeting' by Kiernan, while Kopra has given quite different interpretation as 'shine of your eyes when we met', which suggests the quite opposite idea that the comrade is happy to see the poet. On the contrary, in Faiz's context, comfort for a lover may come even only at the sight of his comrade. An Urdu lover being in his social context i.e. opposite to western culture, may draw his pleasure only from the glimpse of his beloved. A physical contact which the word "Meeting", as used in translation, suggests is not mandatory for a loving heart.

Thus the translators, in their efforts to retain Faiz's poetic sense, are likely to lose the 'feel' and vice versa. That's why Rahim (2008: 54) says, "Poetry in Urdu may not – would not – be poetry or remain poetic in another language or culture. To keep it equally poetic, lyrical, is not ordinary challenge for a translator."

Table 3. Comparative Analysis

Line No	Faiz	a) Kiernan	b) Kopra	Translation Method
9	زہر کا رنگ، لہو رنگ، شبِ تار کا رنگ	Colour of poison, colour of blood, or shade Of sable night,...	of dark sky, of poison, of blood.	a)Literal Translation b) Literal Translation
10	آسمان راہِ گزر، شیشہ مہ	..., sky, highroad, glass of wine--	Now I see the sky, the road,	a) Literal Translation b) Literal

			the glass full of wine,	Translation
			...	
11	کوئی بھیگا ہوا دامن، کوئی دھکتی ہوئی رگ	The first a tear-stained robe, the next a nerve	..., my wet robe, my aching nerves in a mirror,	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation
12	کوئی ہر لمحہ بدلتا ہوا آئینہ ہے	Aching, the last a mirror momenting altering...	... a mirror, changing moment by moment.	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation

In the above table, both translators are using literal translation distorting the social sense and feel of the original verses. In his other typical idiomatic expression, “بھیگا ہوا دامن”, Faiz portrays a figure that is shedding tears out of shame, repentance or at the absence of the companion and the Urdu word “Daman”, rich in his expression, symbolizes the “whole life span” or “the social character” of a person. In this context, the word “robe” used by the translators in their above translations are by no means the just equivalent in English poetic tradition to convey the true sense of Faiz’s very poetic expression.

Fourthly, Faiz has followed a certain metrical pattern. The repetition of the word “رنگ” denotes a rhythmic touch to his poem. On the contrary we see that none of the above has made even a conscious effort to translate this aesthetic aspect which is definitely contributing its role to enhance the ‘feel’ of the poem. That’s why Bassnett and Lefevere (1998) quoted Robert Frost, “Poetry is what gets lost in translation”.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis

Line No	Faiz	a) Kiernan	b) Kopra	Translation Method
13	اب جو آئے ہو تو ٹہرو کہ کوئی رنگ کوئی رُت کوئی شے	Now you have come, stay here, and let some colour, Some month, some anything,...	Since you’ve come, please stay. May the things - the colours, the seasons,	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation
14	اک جگہ پر ٹہرے	..., keep its own place,	stay as if they were in one place.	a) Literal Translation b) Literal Translation
15	پھر سے اک بار ہر اک	And all things once	May everything be as	a) Literal

	چیز وہی ہو کہ جو ہے	again be their own selves,	it used to be -	Translation b) Literal Translation
16	آسماں حدِ نظر راہگزر، راہگزر شیشہء مہ، شیشہء مہ	The sky sight's bound, the road a road, wine wine.	The sky, as far as I could see, the road to travel by, a road, the goblet, brimming with wine.	a) Literal Translation b) Interpretation

While translating, both of the translators fail to retain the musical element of Urdu verses. Faiz's use of repetition of certain words is not only giving rhythm to his verses, but also show the importance of his message, which Kiernan and Kopra didn't follow in their translations.

Results

In the light of the above data analysis and discussion, we may draw the results that translating literary genre especially poetry from Urdu to English is a challenging task particularly when SL and TL belong to culturally, socially, and historically different background. The researchers have reached two important conclusions:

Firstly, Urdu metaphorical concepts in Faiz's poetry cannot be conveniently substituted or assimilated in English, and the literal translation of these ideas would simply deform the original poetry, draining, sense, feel and passion out of it. As Rahim (2008: 54) compiled Faiz's views, when he saw a translation of one of his poems by someone, It's "obviously far more formidable when the languages involved are far removed from each other in cultural background, rhythmic and formal patterns and the vocabulary of symbol and allusion as Urdu and English.", which generally lack "idiomatic affinities". Further, it was noted in the current study that the translators could not find appropriate TL equivalent for Urdu compound words which are rich in meaning and cultural implications. Moreover, the translators could not preserve the musicality and rhythm of the original verses in order to communicate their semantic aspect.

Secondly, these metaphorical and relative compound words were hard to translate because of their deep rooted cultural and social meanings. Since Faiz's poetry is replete with social commenting and historical and political references of his age, the translators face problem in finding their suitable equivalent in TL. Faiz (Majeed, 2005) defines sense as compact definition of "reasonbeing the social comment" which strengths an individual's growth in connection with society. He (Majeed, 2005: 210) says, "... poetry must be the most vivid expression of the most profound feelings of its age,...", and Faiz has projected his age very strongly. Faiz was a social reformer. He used his poetry for "the great social changes". According to him, "A poet writes today for the Evolution... otherwise, by and large, he writes nonsense." (Majeed, 2005: 211). Therefore, a translator's efforts will end in futile, if he fails to convey Faiz's same evolutionary purpose or message to the target reading community.

Faiz was a poet of conscience. His poetry had a purpose, that is, social sense and feel. One presupposes the other. Faiz says as Majeed (2005: 211) preserves it, "I use the word, in a general way, for the great social changes, that we all feel the necessity of... These great changes require the development of our highest feelings, and..., can be transferred from one man to another by means of poetry"

Pritchett (2000) says that among modern poets "the inescapable, indispensable one is Faiz". Translation cannot be exact like the original text no matter how much genuine efforts a translator has made. Therefore, as the general theory of translation practice implies, translating Faiz is not an easy task for the translators of another language and culture. Bennett (2002) writes, "Christopher Caudwell notes in his 'Illusion and Reality', while the qualities of great novels can survive translation, those of poetry cannot.

Conclusion

To sum up the whole discussion we can say that due to the limited scope of the translation practice, transforming one literary piece of writing from one language to another is near to impossible. Bennett (2002) says that the literal translation of a poem can never be a "poetic result" because a poem "is a music of words" in which the flow of speech sounds follows a certain pattern governed by syntax and prosody which a language historically and socially inherits. "Literal translations do not make a poem", said Bennett (2002).

On the other hand, "a free translation may all make an acceptable, even an outstanding poem, but then it may not be a "translation", opined Bennett (2002). In this way a translator may add those meanings to the poem which would not be intended by the poet of the source text. Therefore, one can enjoy the true spirit of Faiz's poetry written only in Urdu. Otherwise, we need another Faiz in English to translate Urdu Faiz.

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Appendices

رنگ بے دل کا مرے

By: Faiz Ahmad Faiz

تم نہ آئے تھے تو ہر اک چیز وہی تھی کہ جو ہے
آسمان حدِ نظر راہگزر راہگزر، شیشہ مہ، شیشہ مہ
اور اب شیشہ مہ، راہگزر، رنگِ فلک
رنگ بے دل کا مرے خون جگر ہونے تک
چمپی رنگ کبھی راحتِ دیدار کا رنگ
سرمئی رنگی ہے سا عتِ بیزار کا رنگ
زرد پتوں کا خاص وخر کا رنگ
سُرخ پھولوں کا دہکتے ہوئے گلزار کا رنگ
زہر کا رنگ، لہو رنگ، شبِ تار کا رنگ
آسمان راہگزر، شیشہ مہ
کوئی بھیگا ہوا دامن، کوئی دھکتی ہوئی رگ
کوئی ہر لحظہ بدلتا ہوا آئینہ ہے
اب جو آئے ہو تو ٹہرو کہ کوئی رنگ کوئی رُت کوئی شے
اک جگہ پر ٹہرے
پھر سے اک بار ہر اک چیز وہی ہو کہ جو ہے
آسمان حدِ نظر راہگزر، راہگزر شیشہ مہ، شیشہ مہ

a) Before You Came

Translated by: Victor Kiernan

Before you came, all things were what they are—
The sky sight's boundary, the road a road,
The glass of wine a glass of wine; since then,
Road, wineglass, colour of heaven, all have taken
The hues of this heart ready to melt into blood--
Now golden, as the solace of meeting is,
Now grey, the livery of despondent hours,
Or tint of yellow leaves, of garden trash,
Or scarlet petal, a flowered all ablaze:
Colour of poison, colour of blood, or shade
Of sable night, sky, highroad, glass of wine--
The first a tear-stained robe, the next a nerve
Aching, the last a mirror momenting altering...
Now you have come, stay here, and let some colour,
Some month, some anything, keep its own place,

And all things once again be their own selves,
The sky sight's bound, the road a road, wine wine.

b) It is the Colourof my Heart

Translated by Ravi Kopra

When you didn't come,
things were they should be -
the sky was as far as I could see,
the road to travel by was a road,
the goblet was a glassful of wine.
And now, a glassful of wine,
the road to travel by,
and the colour of the sky,
are like the colours of my blood,
flowing from my heart to my liver.
Sometimes golden, like the
shine of your eyes when we meet.
Sometimes grey and saddening like
the sickening feelings of partings.
Other times like colours of old
leaves, of trash, of dry grass,
of red flowers in flower-beds,
of dark sky, of poison, of blood.
Now I see the sky, the road,
the glass full of wine, my wet
robe, my aching nerves in a mirror,
changing moment by moment.
Since you've come, please stay.
May the things - the colours, the seasons,
stay as if they were in one place.
May everything be as it used to be -
The sky, as far as I could see,
the road to travel by, a road,
the goblet, brimming with wine.